

Green Mountain Club Long Trail Protection 2025 Update

To the Senate Committee on Institutions



The Green Mountain Club and the Long Trail System:

The mission of the Green Mountain Club is to make the Vermont Mountains play a larger part in the life of the people by protecting and maintaining the Long Trail System and fostering, through education, the stewardship of Vermont's hiking trails and mountains. GMC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

The Green Mountain Club (GMC) was founded in 1910 with one goal: to build a long-distance hiking trail that spans the length of Vermont's mountains. The first of its kind, the Long Trail (LT) was built as a "footpath in the wilderness" for hikers to experience Vermont's natural beauty. It runs the length of Vermont for 272 miles along the ridgeline of the Green Mountains. On the Long Trail, hikers encounter the best natural features Vermont has to offer, including pristine ponds, alpine sedge, hardwood forests, and swift streams. The Long Trail is the oldest long distance hiking trail in the country, built between 1910 and 1930. Over 200,000 people hike on the Long Trail each year and approximately 330 hike it end-to-end as a "thru" hike.

The Vermont Legislature has recognized the value and role GMC and the Long Trail play for the state of Vermont. In 1985, a joint resolution recognized the Long Trail as a **"unique, historic and irreplaceable resource, whose protection is of great benefit to the people of the State of Vermont"** and resolved that the **"General Assembly supports the efforts of the Green Mountain Club to protect the Long Trail System."**

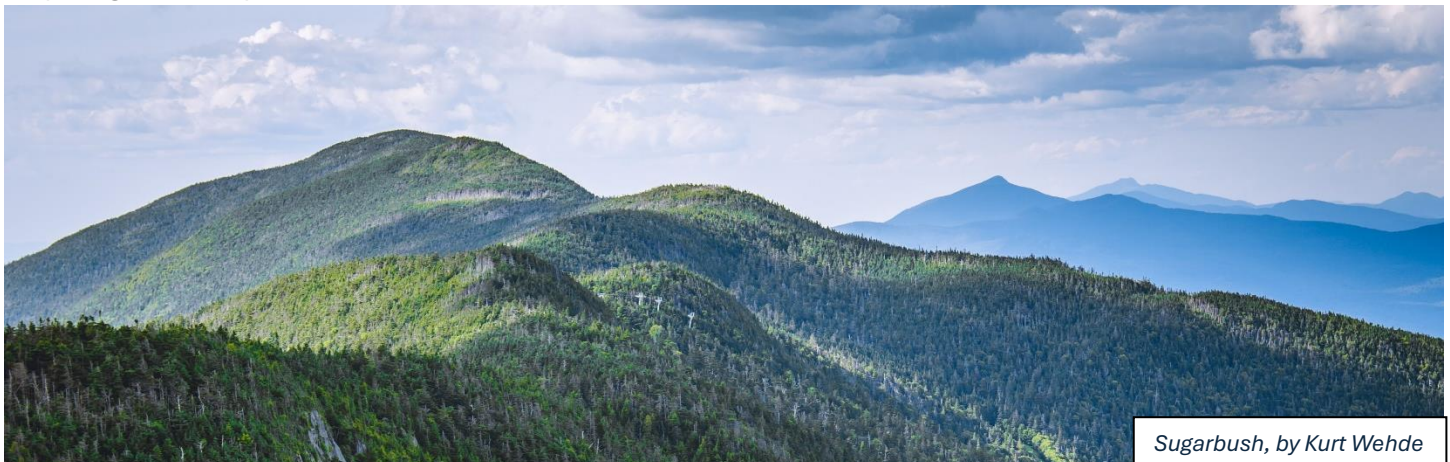
Together, the Green Mountain Club and General Assembly have taken on the bold goal of protecting the Long Trail System, ensuring its legal status and natural setting through land protection. **"In 1986, the Green Mountain Club and the state of Vermont embarked together on a land protection campaign to ensure a permanent corridor for the trail's path and its connecting side trails, an effort which is nearly complete but continues to this day"** (2010 Joint Resolution)

Long Trail System Protection:

Today 97% of the Long Trail System is protected thanks to the 25,000 acres the Long Trail Protection Campaign has conserved and over \$3.5 million dollars the General Assembly has contributed towards the effort. These dollars are invested in lands that have been incorporated into the State Forest system and will continue to benefit the people of Vermont in perpetuity.

Today, unprotected miles of Long Trail System stand at **4.5 miles** of Long Trail across 13 different properties, and 12.7 miles of side trails across 45 different properties.

To reach our shared goal of protecting the Long Trail, we must remain committed to conserving the last 3% through acquiring ownership or easements.



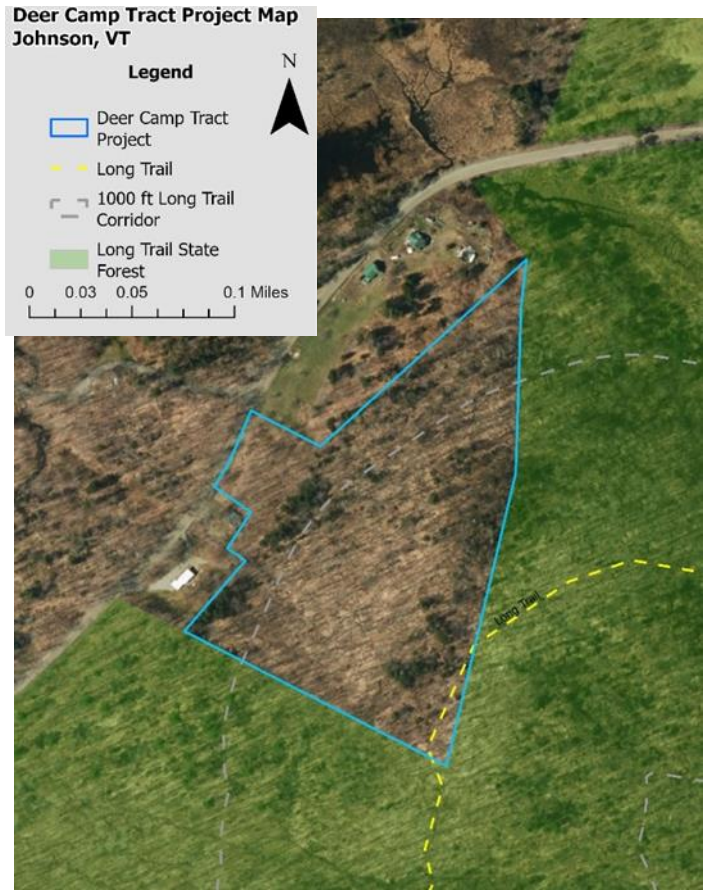
Sugarbush, by Kurt Wehde

Recent Accomplishments:

In 2023 GMC developed a strategic conservation plan for the Long Trail Protection Campaign, reexamining and recommitting to this critical work. The plan can be viewed at <https://arcg.is/1q4LWT0>. **Under this plan, GMC’s goal is to have nine land protection projects in cultivation over the next three years, and we need to have the ongoing support from the General Assembly to make those projects possible and achieve our collective goal of permanently protecting the Long Trail.**

In 2024 GMC purchased the 12-acre “Deer Camp Tract” in Johnson that hosts 300 feet of Long Trail treadway. While small, this parcel is critical in ensuring the Long Trail’s continuity and protected landscape. GMC is working to transfer the land to the state of Vermont to be incorporated into the Long Trail State Forest with a GMC retained conservation easement.

Also in 2024, Middlebury College donated a 1.5-mile-long trail right-of-way (ROW) to GMC across the Snowbowl ski area in Hancock. This generous gift legally secures the future of the Long Trail and formalizes its management.



Trail Protection Focal Areas:

Over the next three years, GMC’s focus will be to curate land protection opportunities in

County	Number of parcels	Acres	Conservation Targets
Addison	5	702	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.27 miles Long Trail • 0.82 miles Side Trail
Bennington	2	160	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.6 miles of Long Trail corridor lands
Chittenden	6	1,150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.04 mile Long Trail • 1 mile Side Trail and corridor lands
Lamoille	6	2,250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 miles Long Trail and corridor lands
Orleans	2	3,070	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.8 miles Long Trail and corridor lands
Rutland	7	717	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.7 miles Long Trail & Appalachian Trail, • 0.08 miles Side Trail, and corridor lands
Washington	4	5006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.7 miles Long Trail corridor lands • 2.5 miles Side Trail
Windsor	1	3,988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.25 miles of Appalachian Trail corridor lands

As the new biennium gets underway, GMC would welcome an opportunity to testify to the committee, discuss next steps to achieve our shared goal, and answer any questions the committee might have.

For more information,
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